

March 19, 2009

Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Raised Bill # 6666, Section 7

Dear Education Committee:

Our names are Mark and Marinelle Mayo, we reside in Fairfield, CT and are the proud parents of a 14-year old boy in the autistic spectrum. We are writing you because we strongly urge you to support Bill # 6666, Section 7 which would ensure that only those with a credential in behavior analysis are utilized by public schools to oversee implementation of children's IEP's when these services are called for on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Our son attended Fairfield public schools for six years and we saw minimal educational and social progress after exhausting all the resources (which included a consultation with a behavioral analyst) available to us through the system. As a result of the lack of progress, escalating anxiety and behavioral issues, we enrolled our son in the Connecticut Center for Child Development in Milford, which employs the Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) method to teach autistic children. In the past year-and-a-half our son has attended this school, he has made significant academic and social progress because of the methodologies and well-written program employed by the highly-trained staff. We are grateful that this type of school now exists for our son because we had not realized how successful an ABA program can be. As parents who see significant positive gains in our son, we are cognizant of how skilled and informed school staff must be in order to implement an ABA program for the autistic population.

While the number of children with autism in Connecticut has skyrocketed, the number of behavior analysts working with this segment of the population has also increased exponentially. However, school districts and parents continue to hire individuals that do not have adequate training or an appropriate professional credential. In fact, many parents and school districts are still unaware of what kind of education and experience someone identifying themselves as a behavioral analyst should have, and are basing their hiring decision solely on the claims made by the provider. Every other professional discipline that works with children with special needs must have a valid license or certification. School districts do not have a mechanism in place for vetting potential employees or behavioral analytic consultants as is the standard practice for other related service providers such as occupational therapists or speech pathologists.

We have great safeguards in place for consumers of a wide variety of services, including some seemingly routine professions like hairstylists and backhoe operators, **yet those working with some of our most disabled students are not monitored in any way.** We are hoping you will join our effort to protect the health and well being of the children we cherish, the parents who love them, and the school districts who have to pay the bill. Please support Raised Bill #6666, Section 7.

Sincerely,

Mark T. Mayo and Marinelle Mayo
1600 Cross Highway
Fairfield, CT 06824
203-254-7316